

The bill before us makes critical investments in education which are fully paid for by closing tax loopholes that reward corporations who ship jobs overseas and by finding savings in other programs. Just this week, the New Jersey School Boards Association released a survey that found that 80 percent of school districts expect to have larger class sizes and fewer teachers when school starts this fall. Our children do not get a second chance to succeed in school, and our future economic growth depends on a well educated and innovative workforce. We cannot afford to shortchange our children or risk laying off our teachers.

The current economic downturn has hit the tax base hard, schools have suffered and many are being forced to cut services. Previously, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act made several sound investments in public education to keep teachers in the classroom and help school districts avoid painful cuts. Most, if not all, of this emergency funding has been spent. Further, at this most critical time, Governor Christie made the wrong call in cutting state aid to our local schools. Already he has cut \$1.2 billion from education programs statewide.

The \$10 billion included for the Education Jobs Fund will help keep teachers in the classroom and make sure that class sizes do not balloon next fall. This funding will help keep 161,000 teachers in the classroom and at work, 3,900 in New Jersey and 160 in Central New Jersey.

I am deeply concerned that Governor Christie is considering not applying for the funds our state is slated to receive. If he fails to do so, the legislation allows the U.S. Secretary of Education to make awards to other entities in New Jersey so our students do not suffer.